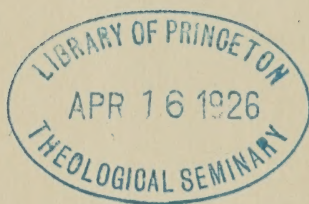


THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

W. T. CONNER





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THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

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The RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A MESSAGE OF HOPE
AND CHEER

By W. T. CONNER, D.D.

*Professor of Systematic Theology in the Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Author
of "A System of Christian Doctrine"*



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TO BLANCHE HORNE CONNER
WHOSE LIFE EXEMPLIFIES THE
RESURRECTION POWER
OF GOD

PREFACE

This book is meant primarily to convey a message. It is not intended to try to settle the questions over which scholars debate so much as it is to enable Christians to grasp something of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for life and destiny. If the book shall be used by the Head of the church to help some of its readers to come anew into fellowship with the living Christ and know afresh something of his resurrection power, then the author will have his reward.

I am indebted to Prof. H. E. Dana, head of the New Testament department in the Southwestern Seminary, for helpful suggestions.

W. T. CONNER.

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THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

THE RESURRECTION A SURPRISE

THE resurrection of Jesus was one of the greatest surprises in the history of the world. In fact, it was such a great surprise that many men do not yet accept it as a fact.

It was a surprise to the enemies of Jesus. They had taken precautions, not against his resurrection, but against his disciples' stealing away the body of Jesus and putting out a false report that he had risen. They sealed the tomb with the seal of the Roman Empire and put a heavy guard around it to see that the disciples of Jesus played no trick on them (Matt. 27: 62-66). They recalled the statement of Jesus that he would rise from the dead. Perhaps they had seen enough of the impressive personality of Jesus and of his power over men to conjecture that it would not be so difficult to get men to believe that such a man had risen from the dead. Perhaps there was a kind

of dumb consciousness on their part that it would be a moral anomaly for such a man's career to come to an end. They may have felt, half-unconsciously, that death should not speak the last word concerning such a man.

Anyway, they took precaution against his disciples' getting out any false reports on the subject. There may have been something of the uneasiness in their hearts concerning Jesus that there was in the guilty conscience of Herod concerning John the Baptist. If only the dead would stay dead for those who dispatch them! Somehow murdered kings have a way of coming back to Lady Macbeths. They won't stay out of the way when they are put out of the way.

But in this case the crucified Lord did not come back to his murderers in a vision produced by a guilty conscience; he came back in personal appearance to his friends and disciples. If only these enemies of Jesus had thought to take precaution against the power of God as well as against the trickery of the disciples! When a man sins, he always overlooks one factor in the situation; and unfortunately that factor happens to be the only one that counts in the long run—namely, God.

The resurrection of Jesus, however, was a surprise to the friends of Jesus as well as to his enemies. His disciples, when they came to believe in him as Messiah, expected him to remain here and rule over Israel. The enthusiasm of the people ran so high in this direction at one time that they were going to take him by force and make him a king (John 6: 15). Not even the most spiritually discerning of his followers thought he would fulfil his mission by death. When Jesus announced to them that he would die, the spokesman of the twelve dared to take him to task for it, and to tell him that such a thing could never be (Mark 8: 31ff).

If the disciples did not expect Jesus to die, much less did they expect him to rise after he died. When the women went to the tomb on the resurrection morning, they were saying, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" (Mark 16: 3). They expected to find that stone there, and the tomb sealed and the body of Jesus within. The purpose of their visit was to anoint the body. But when they got there and found the stone rolled away and saw the "young man," they were "amazed." And when they heard the message about his being

risen and were invited to look on the place where his body had lain, they fled in trembling and "astonishment" (Mark 16: 3-8). When the women reported these things to the apostles, their word appeared to these apostles as "idle talk," and they disbelieved them (Luke 24: 10, 11). Peter then ran to the tomb (perhaps John with him, John 20: 1ff), stooped down, looked in and saw the "linen cloths by themselves," and departed to his house "wondering at that which had come to pass" (Luke 24: 12). That same day two of his disciples were going to a village named Emmaus. As they journeyed and talked about the recent happenings in Jerusalem, the unrecognized Christ joined them; and when he inquired what they were communing about, they told him about the strange providence of God that allowed the chief priests and rulers to crucify the "prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." Then they said, "We hoped" (Luke 24: 13ff). As much as to say, "Our hope is gone; it is a thing of the past." The ruthless slaying of the mighty prophet had dashed their hopes to pieces. But they went on to add, as if a faint gleam of new hope were beginning to appear in their hearts, that

“certain women of our company amazed us” by going to the tomb early and coming back and reporting that they did not find his body and that they had seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

So it is perfectly evident from the gospel accounts that the disciples did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead and that they were surprised when they discovered that he had. In fact, the word surprise is too mild to express it. They were *astonished*, *amazed* at the strange things happening around them. They could not grasp the situation. They seemed to be like men in a dream—seeing strange things and trying to grasp what it all meant.

They should have been better ready to grasp this glorious fact of the resurrection of Jesus, because he had told them that it was coming. In view of the plain statements of Jesus beforehand that he would die and rise from the dead, it is a little strange that they seemed to be utterly unprepared for either his death or resurrection.

Some people would have us believe that Jesus never really foretold his death and resurrection, but that the statements to the effect that he did are unhistorical, that these state-

ments got into the gospel accounts later on from those who had come to believe that he had died and risen and who were looking back on the events of his life through a haze that caused them to see things that really were not there. There are a number of things that would show this view of the matter to be wrong; but all that is necessary to say here is that, if one believes that Jesus did die and rise from the dead, he will not be apt to have much trouble with the statements that he foretold his death and resurrection. On the other hand, if he did not die and rise, there is nothing to Christianity any way and there is no need to go any further with the discussion. Jesus himself, when challenged by his enemies, staked all his claims on his future resurrection from the dead (Matt. 12: 38ff).

But it is not at all impossible to understand how the disciples should have failed to expect Jesus to die and rise again even in the face of the fact that he had predicted that he would do so. For one thing, the idea of his death was always an unwelcome one to them and one that they would not for a moment entertain. In fact, it has been suggested, and perhaps with some justification from the gospel records,

that toward the end of his ministry there was a kind of coldness, even estrangement, that grew up between Jesus and his disciples due to his insistence on the idea of his coming death. He was looking forward to his death and resurrection as the crowning event of his ministry, as the main thing for which he came into the world. They were expecting a temporal kingdom to be set up and scheming who should get the big places when it was set up. His conception and outlook for the kingdom were totally different from theirs. The main events therefore to which he was looking forward in founding the kingdom had no place in their conception of the matter. Consequently the idea of his death and resurrection could find no lodgment in their minds until these events took place before their eyes. Ideas that have no relation to other ideas already in our minds can not find a lodging there. Especially is this true if the new idea is one that is not wanted. When such an unwelcome idea comes into mind, it gets such a cool reception that it soon retires and seeks a more congenial atmosphere. Getting the disciples of Jesus to welcome the thought of his coming death was about like getting a Baptist to welcome the idea

of infant baptism or getting a country deacon in Texas to believe in evolution.

Jesus indicates that his disciples ought to have been prepared to expect his resurrection from their reading of the Old Testament (Luke 24: 25, 26, 44ff). He saw the doctrine of the resurrection in these scriptures (Luke 20: 27-38 and parallels). God is not the God of dead men but of the living. But the disciples did not see the resurrection power of God in the Old Testament as Jesus did, nor did his predictions of his own death and resurrection take hold of their minds and hearts. Hence when he died, they were utterly downcast and confounded, and when he rose from the dead, they were astonished and amazed. It took them some time to adjust themselves to the new and strange situation. It was so much more glorious than anything they had anticipated that their whole mental lives had to be revolutionized to allow for this new and glorious fact.

THE CONVICTION OF THE DISCIPLES

In spite of the fact, however, that the disciples were slow to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, it is evident from the New Testament that they did come to accept it as a fact.

Evidently they accepted it because there was nothing else to do. They believed him alive from the dead, not because they expected it, but in spite of the fact that they did not expect it. It wholly misrepresents the situation to say that these disciples were looking for his resurrection, that they were over-credulous concerning the matter, and that therefore they came to accept the idea that he had risen without sufficient evidence. The situation as we find it in the New Testament was exactly the opposite of this. They were not expecting him to rise; they were therefore slow to believe, but did come to believe because the evidence forced them to it. The other view is very plausible in a way; that is, one can easily imagine its taking place that way. But we need not deceive ourselves in regard to the matter. The fact that we can imagine that it might have taken place that way is no evidence that it did take place that way. We can imagine that a good many things might have taken place during the course of human history. But to imagine a thing taking place and to have evidence that it did take place are two different things altogether. And there is no evidence that the disciples came to believe in the resurrection of

Jesus by any such process as the one we are here considering. All the evidence in the New Testament is to the effect that they came to believe in the resurrection of Jesus because they had dependable evidence that he was alive from the dead. Anybody who advocates the other view gets it, not out of the New Testament, but out of his own head. Now if a man wants to imagine a story like that and pass it off as an imaginary story, that is all right. He is entirely within his own rights in doing so. But nobody has a right to pass off such an imaginary story as that, without the slightest historical or rational evidence to support it, and expect other people to accept it as an account of facts.

What was it then that caused the disciples to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead? That question can quickly be answered. It was because he appeared to them. He manifested himself alive. They did not witness the resurrection, but they did see the risen Christ. They knew that he was alive in the same way that one to-day knows that his neighbor, or his wife and children are alive. One knows as a matter of experience, by the testimony of the

senses and by personal communication with the living.

Jesus appeared to them one at a time and in groups. He appeared to Mary (John 20: 16), to Peter (1 Cor. 15: 5), to James (1 Cor. 15: 7), to the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13ff), to ten of the apostles (John 20: 19ff), to all of the eleven apostles (John 20: 26ff), to seven on the Sea of Galilee (John 21: 1ff), to a group on the mountain in Galilee, possibly five hundred of them (Matt. 28: 16ff; 1 Cor. 15: 6). There may have been other appearances, besides the one to Saul, to be discussed later. These show, however, that he appeared under different circumstances and often enough that it could not have been a matter of illusion. They saw him, were invited to touch him (Luke 24: 39), heard his words. They record for us definite instruction that he gave them (Luke 24: 25ff, 44ff; Matt. 28: 16ff, *et al.*).

Much has been made at times of the differences in the accounts of the four Gospels in recording these appearances. Whatever else may be said about it, the differences show that we have here independent accounts. One account does not slavishly copy or reproduce

another. This greatly enhances the value of the testimony. If we had one writer slavishly and mechanically copying or reproducing another, that would cast suspicion on their testimony. The writers do not appear as men afraid their accounts will not be accepted. In fact, they do not seem to be thinking so much about that as they do about recording the facts that they have seen and experienced. And all the accounts do agree on the main thing; namely, that Jesus abundantly manifested himself alive from the dead. When we are listening to witnesses, what we expect of good witnesses is not that they shall agree in all details, but that they agree on the main points at issue. And all the Gospels bear witness to the fact that Jesus gave to his disciples convincing evidence that he was alive from the dead. Practically everybody to-day admits that the disciples believed that Jesus rose. There is no satisfactory way of explaining how they came to believe this except on the supposition that he manifested himself in convincing evidence to their unexpecting and therefore skeptical minds.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DISCIPLES

Another factor in the evidence that Jesus rose is the change that came over the disciples when they came to accept the fact of his resurrection. They came to believe that he was alive and this belief wrought a revolution in their lives. They were altogether different men after they realized that their Lord had risen from the dead. These men who had their hopes all dashed to pieces and who had consequently been utterly disheartened by the death of Jesus, after a little while became as brave as lions and went out in Jerusalem and proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus with such boldness and power that thousands of people, doubtless including many of his enemies, accepted their message and believed in Jesus as the living and ascended Christ. These men bore testimony to the resurrection when their testimony meant social ostracism, the loss of worldly goods and sometimes of life itself. What gave them their confidence and boldness in proclaiming this message? What made them so persistent in their testimony? What gave their testimony such power with the people? Were they beside themselves? What gave their message such transforming power in the lives of men?

Was all this simply the result of a psychological situation? What produced such a psychological situation?

With the enemies of Jesus absolutely in control of the situation in Jerusalem, with Jesus himself out of the way, with his handful of discouraged disciples utterly disappointed and broken in spirit, will somebody please tell us how a psychological situation could arise such as we see in the early chapters of Acts? How could these few discouraged disciples suddenly become so transformed as to proclaim the resurrection in such power as to win thousands of hostile men and so as to produce consternation in the ranks of the enemy?

If we admit the resurrection as a fact, then all is accounted for. If Jesus rose from the dead and manifested himself to his disciples, we can understand how they came to believe him alive, how they were transformed, how they bore witness to the resurrection in such power as to convince multitudes of others. But on any other assumption the whole situation remains unexplained and can not be explained.

THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL

There is another evidence from the New Testament for the resurrection of Jesus that

demands attention. It is the conversion and career of Paul. It is not necessary to review here the facts of Paul's life. It is sufficient to say that he started out as a bitter persecutor of the church. All at once he changed and became the greatest preacher and advocate of Christianity that the world has ever seen. Let us ask ourselves the question: What changed Saul of Tarsus from the bitter persecutor of Christianity to its ablest advocate and most enthusiastic propagandist? Many answers have been proposed to this question. But in reality there is only one answer. That is the answer that Paul himself has given. He says that he was changed by the appearance to him of Jesus alive from the dead (1 Cor. 9: 1; 15: 8; Acts 9: 3-8; 22: 6-11; 26: 12-18). Paul testifies definitely to the fact that Jesus appeared to him. He gives us this testimony in a book (1 Corinthians) that practically all critics, conservative and liberal, admit came from the hand of Paul before 60 A.D.

What shall we say about his testimony? For one thing practically nobody would deny his sincerity. His sacrificial life and intense earnestness would forbid the idea that Paul was insincere. He took his religion seriously. He

did this before his conversion. When he was convinced that this new sect was wrong and ought to be stopped, he went to work to stop it. And when he became convinced that the Christians were right, he did not hesitate to cast in his lot with them, though it meant a life of suffering and hardship and the loss of all that a Jew counted dear in life.

Nor could anyone say that Paul was mentally unbalanced. His writings are too sane, manifest too much mental poise and sound intelligence for that. Paul was an enthusiast, but not a fanatical one. Fanaticism lacks the element of sanity and mental poise. This man Paul is too well known as a sane, intelligent thinker and constructive worker to call him a fanatic. Any man would impeach his own intelligence who accused Paul of lack of intelligence or sanity.

But if Paul was sincere and mentally poised, what shall we say of his testimony to the effect that Jesus changed him by appearing to him alive from the dead? We should here remember also that the living Christ was the center and inspiration of Paul's life. It is not simply a question of Paul's testimony to a detached event. But it is a question of an event

that revolutionized a great life. It is also a question of the inspiration and sustaining power of that life—a life of incessant and arduous labors and sacrificial and unselfish service to God and man. Paul testifies that the living Christ appeared to him, changed the course of his life and guided and sustained him in all his labors. Jesus and the resurrection were central in his message (1 Cor. 15, *et al*). Christ became so real to him and so dynamic in his life that he could say, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1: 21).

Now was Paul mistaken about all this? Did he see Jesus? Was the Christ with whom he believed himself in spiritual communion only an illusion? Do men get inspiration for lives of sustained and heroic self-sacrifice from diseased and over-heated imaginations?

We maintain that there is no rational way to account for Paul's conversion and career other than the way in which Paul himself explains it; namely, that he was arrested in his mad career of persecuting the Christians by the appearance to him of the living Christ, and that from his conversion on he lived in spiritual fellowship with this living Christ who was the inspiration and power of his life. We

challenge anybody to give any other rational explanation of the conversion and career of Paul. Moreover, we affirm that there is no other explanation. Paul's explanation meets every requirement in the situation and accounts for all the facts. No other hypothesis does account for the facts. If Jesus rose from the dead, Paul is accounted for. Otherwise, Paul is a hopeless enigma. Of course, if we accept Paul's account, we must believe in a supernatural Christianity. But to believe in a supernatural Christianity is more rational than to believe in a world in which a career like Paul's could come uncaused and remain forever a hopeless riddle.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LIVING CHRIST

Jesus Christ has transformed the lives of hundreds and thousands as he transformed Paul. He has uplifted nations and transformed civilizations. No parallel to his uplifting and transforming power can be found in history. A unique effect must have a unique cause. The only adequate cause, the only cause that really explains the influence and power of Christ in the world, is the living Christ. This can be shown more definitely by

keeping in mind that this uplifting and transforming process is inseparable from two things. One is the proclamation of Jesus as risen Redeemer and Saviour from sin. One may preach and teach anything else in the world than Jesus as the crucified and risen Saviour of sinners and no such results follow in human life. Let those who believe that an atoning and risen Christ is not essential to Christianity produce results corresponding to those being produced in every mission field of the world by evangelical Christianity; then it will be time enough to consider seriously reducing Christianity to some system of ethics or philosophy that leaves out the cross and the empty tomb.

But to secure such results not only must Christ be proclaimed as risen, he must be believed in as the Redeemer who conquered sin and death in the resurrection. Believing in him merely as teacher and example will not produce such results, nor will believing in any other person or truth.

To put the matter a little differently, there is nothing that uplifts and transforms men like fellowship with the living Christ. To live, by faith, in communion with him as the living Lord, triumphant over sin and death, lifts men

up out of themselves, their littleness, their sins and sordidness as nothing else does. This fact constitutes a valuable, an indispensable element in the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Our fellowship with him is based on the resurrection, and, on the other hand, our fellowship with Christ is assurance of his resurrection. We could not have living communion with a dead Christ. If he be not risen, he could have no power in our lives except a post mortem influence. But the power of Christ in the lives of men is not simply the influence of a dead man—the uplifting power of his example and his teachings; it is the transforming power of a living but unseen personality. It moves on a different plane altogether from the influence of a dead man, such as Napoleon, Washington or Lincoln. It is a unique fact in the history and experience of mankind, and unique facts, when clearly established as facts, must be given unique explanation, must be referred to unique causes. Such a unique explanation is found in the resurrection of Jesus. To reject the resurrection of Jesus on the ground that it is exceptional might be a rational procedure if it were not for the fact that there is a whole series of

facts following the resurrection, and vitally linked up with it, that would be left without explanation. But since we have this series of facts connected with the resurrection and dependent directly on it, it would be irrational to reject the resurrection and leave these facts unexplained.

Some people, too, object to the idea of fellowship with the living Christ on the ground that such an experience is mystical and that mysticism can not be admitted. By this is not meant mystical in the sense of mysterious, difficult to understand, but mystical in the sense of direct and conscious contact of the soul with the divine. But there is no use for one to object to a fact on the ground that his philosophical assumptions will not allow the fact to be. If a fact does not agree with our assumptions or prejudices, then so much the worse for our assumptions. We can not change a fact simply by denying it the right to be. That is the method of Eddyism. But Mrs. Eddy and her followers are not the only people in the history of the world who have tried to get rid of unwelcome facts by denying them the right to exist.

Christian mysticism is a fact. Conversion and communion with God in Christ are facts, and there is no use to deny them. But the objector may say that he is not denying the fact of conversion or even of some kind of mystical experience, but that he denies the Christian's explanation of these; that is, the objector denies that the Christian has fellowship with the living Christ.

But in answer to this we would ask: How is a normal and repeated conscious experience to be understood? Is it best understood from the point of view of the consciousness of the one having the experience or from the point of view of one who does not have it? Who is most likely to understand and be able to explain an experience, the man who has the experience or the man who does not? Who can best understand what is involved in the experience of seeing, the man who sees or the blind man incapable of seeing? Any experience that becomes so normal and regular in human experience that it can be reduced to order is to be understood in terms of the laws that govern the experience. The fact that there are laws that govern the experience is the thing that makes it a normal experience. An experience that is

irregular, spasmodic, not subject to discoverable law, nor to control, is considered abnormal. Here is the difference between the mental and moral life of an insane man and a sane one.

What has just been said means that any normal experience is to be understood in terms of that experience, not in terms of some other experience. A certain realm of experience is in that sense to be subject to home rule, not to foreign domination.

If we apply this principle to Christian experience, it means that Christian experience is not to be interpreted in terms of physical or biological science. Faith that deals with the unseen or spiritual world has its own laws and is not to be subject to the domination of science, in the sense of physical science. And the objection to Christian experience on the ground that it is mystical usually has its foundation in unreasoning prejudice against any reality that cannot be interpreted in terms of the physical or biological sciences, or in terms of naturalism.

The laws then that govern the Christian's fellowship with the living Christ would likely furnish the best key to the interpretation of that experience. Can one discover any such

laws? Yes. As stated above, one of them is that such an experience comes only in connection with a knowledge of Christ as crucified and risen Redeemer, and faith or trust in him as such a Redeemer. Here you have both the objective and subjective factors necessary to knowledge in any realm: you have the universal subject-object relation. Under no other conditions do you have this experience. Moreover, where you have these conditions, you do have universally, in characteristic form, this experience. Besides, in proportion as these conditions fade out and disappear you have the corresponding disappearance of this experience. You may have all sorts of factors entering into Christianity, but so long as you have these factors present—proclamation of Christ as crucified and risen Redeemer and faith in him as such—so long does this characteristic Christian experience remain. But when factors enter in that obscure or destroy these factors, then the characteristic Christian experience is obscured or disappears.

This, it seems to me, amounts to a demonstration that Christ as the living Saviour is the cause and explanation of the Christian's experience of conversion and of fellowship with

God. It seems that one will have to deny the fact or admit the Christian's explanation of the fact.

The Christian's fellowship with the living Christ then carries with it the conclusion that Christ rose from the dead.

CONCLUSION

Jesus rose from the dead. This is one of the foundation facts of Christianity. Without this fact, there could be no Christianity. This idea of the resurrection of Jesus is set forth every time Christians meet on the Lord's day, the first day of the week, to worship God in the name of Jesus. We do not celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday alone. Every Sunday is Easter for the Christian. Every return of the first day of the week reminds us that Jesus is alive. We keep no Jewish Sabbath as devotees of Mosaic legalism; we celebrate on the Lord's day the triumph of the Saviour over sin and the grave, giving us freedom from legalism through the conquering grace of God. The very existence of a Christian church as the body of Christ involves his living as the animating power and presence of the body. The ordinance of

baptism is a constant testimony, not only to his atoning death, but also to his triumphant resurrection from the dead. "Behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:18, Am. Rev.).

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION¹

IF the resurrection of Jesus is to be accepted as a fact, the next question of interest to us would be: What kind of a transaction was it? Just what was it that took place in the resurrection?

Certainly this is a question that any man would want to approach with caution. Nobody with any sense of his own limitations or any consciousness of the greatness of the world in which he lives or of the God who rules the world would care to rush into the discussion of this question with a cock-sure answer to all its problems.

Yet it is a question that we would not and cannot avoid. We inevitably face it when we begin to think on the question of the resurrection of Jesus.

¹On this topic compare, "The Resurrection Body," by Dr. Wilbur W. White, published by the Doran Co.—a book that came to my hands after this chapter was written.

THE EMPTY TOMB

A number of people to-day are inclined to deny the resurrection of the body of Jesus. I do not mean those who deny a future life altogether, those who look on death as the end of all things, nor those who deny that we can have any knowledge of life beyond death, or any rational basis for hope concerning such a life—not outright materialists nor agnostics in their view of life. There is an increasing number perhaps who, while they do not dogmatically deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, are skeptical about it, and say that they do not regard it as essential to Christianity. These people either deny outright, or are skeptical in regard to miracles in the physical realm. They accordingly interpret the resurrection of Jesus to mean the persistence of his personality beyond death. Somehow, they hold, he succeeded in communicating with his disciples and thus assured them that he lived on in spite of death, that he transcended death and its power. Those who take this position do not deny all value to the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus as given in the Gospels, but they seem to think that these early Christians confused the spiritual and physical and

that the evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus is inconclusive. In some cases, it seems to me, they do not squarely face the question as to the value of the evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

I would not care to say that such a view is entirely without value or comfort. It would be worth something to believe that Jesus in his spiritual personality lived on after death. But we are interested, first of all, in what the facts indicate; and there are many things in the New Testament that point clearly in the direction of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And on the basis of the evidence given in the New Testament I maintain that the resurrection of Jesus included the raising of his body from the dead.

On the morning of the resurrection, when the women came to the tomb, they found the stone rolled away and *the tomb empty* (Luke 24: 2, 3). They were invited to look on the place where the body had lain (Mark 16: 6). When Peter and "the other disciple" went to the tomb they also found it empty (John 20: 2ff). They entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying to one side, but the body of Jesus was not there. That is really the first

capital point made by the gospel writers with reference to the matter: the body of Jesus was gone, Joseph's tomb was empty.

Another thing is that they saw Jesus (Mark 16: 11, John 20: 18, 1 Cor. 9: 1, et al) ; they heard his words (Matt. 28: 18-20, Luke 24: 17, 25ff, et al) ; they touched him (Matt. 28: 9) ; he ate before them (Luke 24: 43). It is true that they did not readily recognize him (Luke 24: 16ff, John 21: 4, et al) ; that he passed through closed doors (John 20: 19 ff, 26) ; and seemed to vanish from their sight at times, perhaps at will (Luke 24: 31).

Some would solve this problem by denying the reliability of the records on some of these points. They would regard some of the statements about his eating and about the disciples' touching Jesus as "unconscious materializations." But if this were granted, you still have the other passages in which Jesus is seen and heard, and the emphasis placed by the records (for they do seem to emphasize it) that the tomb was empty. We cannot, therefore, get rid of the idea of the resurrection of the body of Jesus by eliminating one or two passages; to get rid of this idea we would have to reconstruct the whole story. It is plain on the

surface of the gospel accounts that the body of Jesus was not to be found by the disciples of Jesus. Moreover, it might be remarked that the method of solving a problem like this by eliminating those statements in the records that do not agree with our notions of what happened is too easy a method and hardly seems a fair way to deal with the records. Unless there are other reasons for eliminating such statements, we had better try to find some other way out of our difficulty.

The old question that has been so often asked, but never answered, is still calling for answer. If the body of Jesus did not rise from the dead, then what became of it? Did the disciples get possession of it and conceal it? How could they get possession of it when the tomb was sealed with the seal of the Roman government and guarded by Roman soldiers? Besides, if they could have got possession of the body, what motive could they have had for concealing it and then trying to deceive others in regard to the matter? They were utterly dispirited and downcast. There was no conceivable reason why they, at the risk of their lives, should practice a fraud and publish a deliberate lie in regard to the matter. They

had everything to lose and nothing to gain by such a course. The very idea is preposterous.

The body of Jesus then did not pass into the hands of his disciples. If his body was not raised from the dead, it follows that it remained in the hands of his enemies. But when the disciples began to testify that Jesus had risen from the dead, why did not his enemies produce the dead body and settle the whole controversy? That would have settled the matter. The resurrection of Jesus was the main element in the preaching of the first Christians. Their testimony could have been refuted once for all by producing the body of Jesus. Surely the people who put Jesus to death and who had charge of his body were the biggest simpletons the world ever saw in a situation like that if they never thought of stopping the whole movement by bringing to view the dead body of Jesus. Why did they not do it? There is only one answer: it was not in their possession. And the disciples did not have it. There was no conceivable reason why they should work themselves up into a fanatical frenzy and seek to deceive the world by hiding the body of Jesus and

reporting that he had risen. Besides, they could not have got possession of the body if they had desired.

There is only one conclusion that the facts will allow. The body of Jesus rose from the dead. The tomb was empty. The body could not be accounted for. His body revived and came out of the tomb and was seen by the disciples.

THE RESURRECTION MORE THAN RESUSCITATION

But while the New Testament records demand a belief in the resurrection of the body of Jesus, these same records forbid the idea that the resurrection was simply a resuscitation of his body. It was not the restoration of Jesus to the natural plane of life. His body was not raised as a body of flesh and blood, subject to death and decay. While it is not distinctly stated, yet it is likely that the people whom Jesus raised from the dead during his earthly life were raised back to the natural plane, with bodies of flesh and blood, to die again as all men die. It was not that kind of a resurrection that Jesus had. It was something more significant and glorious for both himself and for us.

While, as previously stated, then, the New Testament makes it clear that the body of Jesus rose from the dead, still the significance of his resurrection does not lie primarily or mainly in the physical or natural realm. The significance of his resurrection lies mainly in the spiritual realm. His body, in the resurrection, was transformed and glorified. After the resurrection, it seemed to have powers transcending the ordinary powers or laws of matter. He was so changed that he did not seem to be easily recognizable even by his disciples. He seemed to have the power to appear and vanish at will, and to go through closed doors.

Some one has suggested that this process of transformation was not completed until the ascension. That is not at all impossible and may be true. If so, it would help to relieve the difficulty about his body's having in it, after the resurrection, the wounds in the hands and side and about his eating with his disciples. Be that as it may, there will likely be some difficulties remaining with any view. I am not expecting to work out any view, nor to find any worked out by anybody else, that will relieve all the difficulties. I am inclined to think

that the realities of life and experience are too great and glorious to be entirely comprehended in any of our explanations. For that reason I am always suspicious of theories that explain everything. Such theories usually explain by eliminating some of the facts. They simplify by flattening things out too much. Often-times they eliminate the most glorious facts of life and leave us those that are least meaningful and inspiring.

DANGER OF SIMPLIFYING THE FACTS

One such process of oversimplification is to reduce the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus to a belief in his spiritual immortality. The facts do not seem to be satisfied with such an explanation. They seem to require that we believe in the resurrection of the body of Jesus from the tomb.

On the other hand, it is just as much a matter of oversimplification if we regard the resurrection as being the revivifying of his body and raising it to the natural plane of life. Nor was it simply giving him back a body of flesh and blood, but not subject to death in the future. His body evidently had higher powers and capacities than it had before. And this

probably applied to his whole personality. His resurrection might appropriately be spoken of as the rebirth of his whole personality on a higher plane—a plane transcending the present order of things.

SEEN ONLY BY DISCIPLES

This may account for the fact that Jesus, after the resurrection, did not manifest himself to the world generally. There is no record, so far as I recall, that Jesus, after rising from the dead, manifested himself to any except his own disciples and friends. He appeared “not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God.” So testified one of these chosen witnesses, even the leader among them (Acts 10: 41). This fact has appeared to some people to throw suspicion on the value of the evidence for the resurrection. If God raised him from the dead, and wanted all men to believe in him as alive from the dead, why did he not have Christ appear to all men? Why did he not appear to his enemies, to the chief priests, to Pontius Pilate, yea, to the whole world, and let all men know that he was alive from the dead?

This objection overlooks the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was more than the resus-

citation of a dead body. The significance of his resurrection lies mainly in the spiritual realm. He did not rise simply to live endlessly on the same plane as before. The old life was transcended. For a man to see anything more in the resurrection of Jesus than the resuscitation of a dead body that man must have spiritual perception; he must be able to see in Jesus the risen Lord of glory, and it takes more than physical vision to see him thus.

We might look at the matter from either side—the side of Jesus or the side of the witness. From the side of Jesus it is possible that the resurrection had wrought such a change in him that physical eyes alone could not see him. Perhaps this would help to account for the fact that the disciples were so slow in recognizing Jesus at times. Then again on the side of the witness we must remember that, granting that men could have seen him with physical eyes alone, yet it takes more than witnessing physical miracles to produce moral and spiritual results. Many of these people had seen the miracles of Jesus; yet they would not believe. They had seen Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead; but the only result produced with some of them

was to infuriate them so that they plotted to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death (John 12: 10, 11). Spiritual results are not easily produced. Perhaps if he could have manifested himself to some of these people they would have been ready to try to put him to death again. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead (Luke 16: 31). The resurrection of Jesus was a fact whose significance lay primarily in the moral and spiritual realm rather than in the physical. It is entirely possible, therefore, that to see him after the resurrection required more than physical eyes. Be that as it may, it is certain that to see him with only physical eyes would have produced no moral and spiritual results. The only man, other than a disciple, to whom Jesus appeared, so far as definite record goes, was Saul of Tarsus, and in Saul's case he became a disciple at once because he saw Jesus with more than physical vision.

We might repeat then that the resurrection of Jesus included the raising of his body from the grave, but it was much more than the reviving of his body and bringing it back to the natural plane of life. It was the raising

of his whole personality to a higher plane of being. Death was the gateway by means of which he entered upon a larger and more glorious life. In thinking of this, we must remember that the resurrection was followed by the ascension. His resurrection and ascension were parts of one transaction. Some other phases of this matter (bearing on the nature of the resurrection) will come out in the discussion of the significance of the resurrection. We will, therefore, devote the rest of our space to the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. What is its meaning for us and for the world?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION OF JESUS FOR OUR
VIEW OF GOD

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION FOR OUR VIEW OF GOD

IS there a God? If so, what kind of a God is he? These are questions of prime importance for man. If the question, Is there a God? be answered in the negative, then it makes little difference how any other question is answered. Some men insist that this question, as well as all others, shall be investigated in a spirit of cold-blooded indifference with reference to the outcome. I should rather say that any man who comes to this question in such a spirit thereby shows that he has no appreciation of the significance of the question and is consequently foredoomed to failure in his investigation. No man can succeed in arriving at truth in regard to moral and spiritual questions who does not have an appreciation of the tremendous importance of the questions he is dealing with. Such an appreciation is

necessary to spiritual insight, and spiritual insight is the prime qualification for knowing spiritual truth. A recent writer has well said: "That state of mental equilibrium which we so often praise as being impartial and free from bias is unsuited to the investigation of the significance of life."¹

The second question is of scarcely less importance than the first. If there is a God, what kind of a God is he? Everything in human life depends on the answer to these two questions. In all ages of the world, men have approached these questions in every conceivable way and have arrived at all sorts of conclusions. The best minds of the race have given their most concentrated and prolonged attention to the idea of God. It is a question that men cannot let alone and would not if they could. They cannot let it alone, because it will not let them alone. The question of God is much more fundamental and important, more all-persuasive in interest for mankind than the questions of government, industry, and society. The condition of the stock market or the state of the weather are of temporary interest, but

¹"Must We Part With God?" by Ernest F. Champness, published by The MacMillan Co.

the question of God is permanent. The stock market may be bad to-day, but it will improve tomorrow. The weather may be foul to-day, but it will be fair tomorrow. But if there is no God, or if he is not good in character, then nothing can ever be any better. In fact, if there is no God, then there is no good or bad, no better or worse. Everything is just blind fact without meaning or value.

Our question in this chapter is: What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for our view of God? What bearing does it have on our idea of God? One does not have to think on the question very long before he sees that it means everything for our conception of God.

In discussing the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for our view of God, it will be understood, of course, that there is no intention of minimizing the other factors in the life of Jesus, for instance, the teaching of Jesus concerning God. But it is meant that, taking these other factors for granted, we shall think about the significance of his *resurrection*. Furthermore, we will remember that it is the meaning of the resurrection of *Jesus* that we are considering. The same Jesus who gave us such comforting and meaningful words about

the heavenly Father is the same Jesus who rose from the dead. What is the meaning of *his* resurrection for our view of God?

GOD A FACT

Jesus rose from the dead. That fact takes God out of the realm of speculation and theory and brings him down into the realm of history and of fact. Men have employed their keenest thought and most subtle arguments to validate the idea of God. Doubtless much of their argument has been valid and much of it faulty. There is no disposition on the part of the writer to deny the value of these efforts. These arguments have shown, to say the least of it, that the idea of God is an idea intellectually respectable in any company. So far as intellectual standing is concerned, no man need apologize for believing in God. The idea of God is able to stand its ground among the great ideas of the mind.

But the idea of God arrived at by means of a process of reasoning is often in a state of unstable equilibrium. What argument establishes argument can often overthrow. There are systems of thought other than theism that can claim great intellectual respectability and

strength. Many people have often clung to their faith in God in spite of the intellectual difficulties rather than because of the strength of the arguments for theism. This is not to say that belief in God is irrational, but rather that many people, in spite of intellectual confusion on this subject and in spite of arguments the subtlety of which they could not penetrate, have been guided by their hearts and consciences and have held on to God. In fact, it is doubtful if very many people have ever come to believe in God because of the cogency of the intellectual arguments for God. These arguments have rather been used to validate a belief in God that men already had; they have been used to clarify already existing faith. Men have probably believed in God more because their moral nature called for God than because intellectual considerations demanded such belief. Many people have been like the old lady who said to her pastor, after he had preached a learned and eloquent sermon to prove the existence of God: "Pastor, I still believe in God, in spite of all your argument."

Moreover, men need that God shall be more than an idea to them. The idea of God may be validated as a factor in an intellectual

system, but a bare intellectual idea of God will have little vitality and power in the lives of men. God should be more than a conclusion at the end of a syllogism; he should be a living power. For God to be such a living power in the lives of men he must reveal himself in the world of objective fact. Man's life is not a life of mere intellectual contemplation nor of bare inner, mystical experience. It is first of all a life related to an objective social order. Man is a factor in such an order and is utterly dependent on it. This is true of man's religious life as well as of any other phase of his life. The power and persistence of idolatry testify to man's need of a concrete, historical revelation of God. The doctrine of God, apart from such a revelation in the objective world, will no more meet man's religious need than the idea of bread will satisfy his physical hunger.

Such a revelation of God we have in Jesus Christ. He came into the world in obedience to the Father (John 3: 17; 5: 36, 38, et al); he was the embodiment of God's love and life, so that he was the revelation of God (John 1: 18, et al); he died on the cross in obedience to God (Phil. 2: 8, et al); God raised him from the dead (Rom. 8: 11, et al). His resurrec-

tion, therefore, was the act of God. He was crucified at the hands of wicked men. God intervened on his behalf. He had lived such a life as no other man had ever lived—a life wholly given up to the will of God and unreservedly devoted to the service of mankind. For such a man, yea, for the sinless Son of God, to die at the hands of wicked men made his death the supreme crisis in the history of the world. Such a deed was a challenge to God himself. And God did not decline the challenge. He accepted it and showed his hand. He entered the lists and showed himself God in the realm of history and of objective fact. The resurrection was God's deed; it was a deed of triumph over wicked and godless men. God's voice rang out in this supreme crisis of the world saying in very deed that sin and hatred, superstition and darkness should not rule the world. Many times God seems to be silent in great crises. He seems not to care while right is being crucified and wrong is on the throne. But for God to remain silent and inactive at this supreme crisis would have been too much. It is difficult to see how there could have been any God; a God who would not have intervened now (Is it too much to

say it?) would have abdicated his throne. He would have resigned in favor of the forces of evil. In that case the devil would have been God over the world; he would have been supreme with an unchallenged supremacy.

No, God did not remain silent and inactive. He spoke a word that sent terror to the very depths of hell, a word that meant the overthrow of sin and Satan. Wrong should not, could not, go thus unrebuked. God must speak; and he did. He spoke a word that was unmistakable in its meaning.

The resurrection of Jesus thus gives us a God revealed in the realm of objective fact. No man can believe in the resurrection of Jesus and not believe in God. If we accept the resurrection of Jesus, God is for us no longer a problem of thought; he is a datum of history. Instead of being a problem of thought he is the one fact who solves, or will solve, all the problems of history and of experience. I do not mean by this that we get an immediate intellectual solution for the moral and spiritual problems of life; I mean rather that we have God as a datum of history and experience and that we can trust him to straighten out all the tangled skeins of history and experience.

As Jesus faced the situation on the night before the crucifixion, he invited his disciples to believe in God and believe in himself (John 14: 1). In a few hours, he was in the hands of his enemies and in a few more he was on the cross. Then he was dead. All their hopes were gone. The darkness of despair hung over them. Surely men never faced a more hopeless situation. All was lost. But God intervened and turned defeat into victory. And if God could come out victorious in that situation, he can come out victorious in any situation. If he could be trusted there, he can be trusted anywhere. The darkest point in human history becomes the brightest. Joseph's tomb, in which all their hopes were buried, became the focal point of light to brighten all history and to fill the world with hope and gladness, to change gloom into joy and darkness into light.

GOD A DOER

The resurrection of Jesus then not only brings God into the realm of fact; it also throws light on the question as to what kind of God he is. Perhaps I should say that it throws light on what kind of God he is by bringing him into the realm of fact.

He is no impersonal or semi-personal principle or abstract force; he is a person; he is a doer. The resurrection of Jesus is his deed. This event in human history is not simply an illustration of a universal law that human personality survives death; it may be that, but it is much more than that. It represents the fact that God stepped in at this particular point in history. He stepped in because he chose to do so. He was waiting and watching for the opportune moment to intervene, and when that moment came he did intervene. Jesus had been telling men that God was the heavenly Father, that he was interested in the lives of men, that he took a hand in human affairs. Now, when the supreme crisis in human history came, he vindicated the word of Jesus. He made bare his holy arm and showed that he was a Father who cares, that he would not stand by and see the world go utterly to ruin and wickedness reign. He did care and because he cared he acted. All was lost without God, but he was there and there to save the day.

The resurrection of Jesus shows that God is concerned, tremendously concerned, in human affairs. The God of some present-day

philosophers is a God who knows perhaps, who thinks as the philosophers do, but who does nothing more. He sees the evil of the world, the suffering of man, but takes no hand in affairs. Prof. Royce has said that the value of the idea of God is that we can know that in anything that comes to us there is one who understands.¹ But we want a God who will do something, as well as one that understands. It looks very much in this case as if the philosopher had made his God, and made him in his own image. His God is a great Philosopher who thinks, who contemplates, but does nothing. Such a conception of God reminds us of the old saying about the weather, to the effect that much has been said about the weather but very little ever done.

It was over against this idea of an inactive Philosopher-God, whose only function is to furnish a principle of intellectual unity for the world, that Professor William James developed his conception of a God who is a doer. He says that, whatever else may be said about God, he is no gentleman²; that is, he is not afraid to soil his hands by getting down in the

¹The Religious Aspect of Philosophy, Chapter XII.

²"Pragmatism."

mire and dirt of the world and working to make the world better. Now undoubtedly Professor James is right on this point. God is a worker. He works to make the world better; he works to bring in a kingdom of righteousness and truth in the world. This was manifested supremely in the resurrection of Jesus.

Moreover, he is a moral God. He took a hand by raising Jesus from the dead, because the moral interests of the world were at stake. He could not afford to stand idly by when the supreme moral interests of mankind were imperilled.

GOD SUPREME

Professor William James, in his pragmatist philosophy, gives us a God who is a doer, but limited in power¹. Professor James thinks that God probably works along with us finite beings to make the best he can out of the world, but that even God himself cannot guarantee the outcome. Here undoubtedly the God of Professor James is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was a God of supreme power. Paul speaks of God's power

¹See his "Pragmatism" and "Pluralistic Universe."

in raising Christ from the dead as if it were the supreme exhibition of power (Eph. 1: 19-21). And Paul was right. Nothing but almighty power could have raised Jesus from the dead and placed him at the right hand of God.

The resurrection of Jesus manifested God's supremacy over nature. Nature has no power to transcend death or conquer its power. Death is a law of nature. Nature is so constituted that one of its inevitable laws is that man must die. And on that subject nature has no other word to say. But God had another word to say in the case of Jesus. That word of God unloosed the bands of death and Jesus came forth alive forevermore. Such an idea gives great offense to many "modern" minds. Nothing like a miracle is to be allowed. Nevertheless we cannot undo the facts of history in order to suit the prejudices of the modern mind. What has been written has been written, and will probably have to stand. And one thing that stands out as clear as sunlight in the resurrection of Jesus is that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is supreme over the order of nature.

The moral supremacy of God is also manifested in the resurrection of Jesus. The forces

of evil put him to death. But God showed himself greater than the forces of evil. If Jesus had remained under the power of death, it would have been a demonstration of the supremacy of sin and darkness in the world. The moral order of the world would have been utterly wrecked. Every moral cause would have been in despair. But God intervened and showed himself supreme over the forces of evil. The resurrection of Jesus is a demonstration of the fact that no good cause for which men fight need ever be despaired of. Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right. Why? Because there is a God and he is supreme over all the world. The man who fights for right can count God on his side. God and one make a majority.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION OF JESUS FOR HIS
OWN PERSON

CHAPTER IV

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURREC- TION OF JESUS FOR HIS OWN PERSON

WE have seen something of the significance of the resurrection for our view of God. Let us ask ourselves now: What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to his own person? When we think of Jesus himself, what difference does his resurrection make?

We can very soon see that it has tremendous significance. Suppose Jesus had not risen. It is easy to see in that case that he would not be the Christ of the New Testament and of our Christian experience at all. He would be another Jesus altogether and our gospel would be another gospel. In that case Jesus would be only a historical character and his gospel would be for us only the post mortem influence of a good man. It is to be feared that for many professing Christians Jesus means very little more than this.

This phase of the matter will be discussed in the following chapters. Here our question is rather: What difference did the resurrection mean to Jesus himself? We are so accustomed to thinking of what the resurrection means to us that we forget that it meant something for Jesus. In fact, too many people look on the whole life and experience of Jesus as a kind of stage show. They overlook the fact that the experiences of Jesus were for him genuine human experiences as much so as ours are for us.

Of course, it will be impossible to separate the matter altogether from the thought of what Jesus means to us, but thinking of it primarily with reference to him, his own person and experience, our question is: What did the resurrection signify for Jesus? And again remembering our limitations, we would reverently answer that it means, first,

VICTORY OVER SIN AND DEATH

Jesus battled with sin through his whole life. And it was no sham battle that he fought with sin; it was as real as ever battle was in the

moral realm.¹ He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4: 15). At the beginning of his public ministry, he was tempted to turn aside from the hard road of suffering and death and win his kingdom by an appeal to the popular imagination by throwing himself in a spectacular and miraculous way from the pinnacle of the temple, or by a compromise with sin and Satan, a compromise that would not have given him his kingdom because it would have acknowledged the supremacy of the devil. Jesus had to decide whether he would fight out with sin to the bitter end the question of supremacy in the world, or whether he would choose the easier way of compromise. But he had insight enough to see that complete victory over sin could never be won so long as there was any compromise; the battle must be to the bitter end. The question must be decided once for all whether God or Satan should be supreme in the world, and to fight it through was the only way to determine it. This bitter fight with sin kept up throughout the whole life of

¹On this point cf. G. Campbell Morgan, "Crises of the Christ"; Black, "The Dilemmas of Jesus"; and my "System of Christian Doctrine."

Jesus. It was a war in which there was no surcease, no flag of truce. The devil offered a flag of truce several times, but Jesus always declined. If he had accepted a flag of truce, it would have meant the loss of the whole war. The thing for which he was fighting was the absolute eradication of evil, its complete extermination. Nothing less than that would be a victory for him. That is why the devil tried so hard to get Jesus to accept a compromise. A compromise would have meant victory for the enemy.

The only means by which Jesus could win was to put himself without reservation into the fight. To spare himself meant to lose. This is the only way his followers can win. That is the reason so many of us do lose in the fight; we are not willing to put ourselves without reserve into the conflict. We are too anxious to spare ourselves. We can win only by losing; we can win only by dying; we can save our lives only by losing them.

This means that Jesus declined to use any but moral means to accomplish moral ends. He did not believe that the end justifies the means; in fact, he knew that moral ends can not be reached by carnal means; that spiritual

battles are not won by carnal weapons. Therefore he declined to worship Satan in order to win the supremacy of the world or to cast himself down from the temple in order to win the admiring allegiance of the multitude. He knew that any allegiance thus won could be as easily lost as won. He declined thus to be acclaimed king; he was hailed as king of David by the multitude in the triumphal entry; but when he did not seize the throne and crown they crucified him. He could have avoided the cross by following their lead, but in that case he would have been only one more among the great kings of the earth whose thrones have crumbled and whose crowns have decayed.

Jesus gained his final victory on this question in the garden of Gethsemane. Here he got his final consent to spare not himself, but to fight with sin to the bitter end, even to the giving up of his own life. In obedience to the Father's will, he drank the bitter cup of sorrow and death.

When Jesus died on the cross, it seemed that sin had triumphed. Apparently the battle was lost. But to the surprise of his friends, the dismay of his enemies and the consternation of hell and its forces, Jesus arose. The tomb

was found empty. His apparent defeat was his victory. By losing his life, he had saved it; by giving it away he had kept it. The victory of sin was its defeat. By his own uncompromising fight with sin he had conquered; and by conquering sin he had conquered death. The sting of death is sin (1 Cor. 15: 56), and by extracting the sting of death he had destroyed its power. Having destroyed its power he came forth on the morning of the third day a victor over sin and death.

Sin and death are inseparably connected. They are not two things, they are only two phases or aspects of the same reality. By identifying himself with a sinful race in the incarnation, Jesus came under the power of what Dr. Mullins calls the sin-death principle.¹ He identified himself with the human race to the last possible limit, except by personally sharing in its sin. But although he did not share in its sin, he did share in the woe that grows out of sin. He shared in this more completely perhaps than would have been possible if he had been a sinner. Had he been a sinner he could not have had perfect sympathy for sin-

¹See "The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression," by E. Y. Mullins.

ners. His perfect character was manifested in his complete sympathy for sinners and his unreserved identification of himself with all their woe. Having identified himself with man for man's salvation, he did not draw back from anything that belonged to man. In fact, according to Hebrews, he took our nature that he might die for us (Heb. 2: 14). He did not decline to die because he realized that for that purpose he had come into the world (John 12: 27).

By thus sharing man's lot to the bitter end he conquered sin and death. He shared the common lot of mankind and thus redeemed mankind. He conquered mankind's worst enemy, sin and death, and came off victorious over them.

Again, the resurrection brought Jesus into a position of

LORDSHIP OVER THE WORLD AND OVER MANKIND

This comes out as distinctly in Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost as anywhere else in the New Testament. He says, in speaking of the resurrection, that God has made him to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2: 36). They had crucified this Jesus, had put him to an

open shame, had treated him as if he were the vilest of criminals: but God has reversed the matter; he has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth and things under the earth (Phil. 2: 9, 10). Paul's statement indicates that God did this as a moral reward for his suffering and death in obedience to the will of God.

This lordship that came to Jesus, then, was not something to be taken for granted; it was not a matter of course. It was something that was morally conditioned and morally achieved. It is true that one might gather from Paul's statement and from John's Gospel that somehow this state of exaltation and lordship was potential in this man Jesus because of his pre-existent life and divine glory. But even this must not be allowed to take the moral element out of the life and achievement of Jesus. There was no mechanical guarantee of reaching the goal in his case, no more than there can be in our case. The only guarantees and assurances that can be given in the moral realm are moral in their nature.

Paul's statement also carries with it the idea that this lordship of which Jesus comes into possession is universal: it includes everything in heaven, on earth and under the earth. It is difficult to see how his statement could have been made more sweeping and universal than that. The question has sometimes been debated whether Jesus was Lord over the whole universe, or was Lord only over mankind.¹ It is difficult to see how he could be admitted as Lord over mankind unless he were Lord over the universe. Man is a moral being. The moral realm is the highest we know. If Jesus is Lord there, he must be Lord everywhere. There is nothing to be gained by bisecting the world and admitting Jesus as Lord over only a part of it. If he is Lord of the moral world, he is Lord in the realm of the highest. Why not then Lord of all? Perhaps those who take the other position deceive themselves by reasoning that man is only a small portion of the universe and that Jesus can be admitted as Lord over man without too great offence to the majesty of the vastness of the universe. It is true that man is only a small portion of the

¹See MackIntosh, "The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ."

universe spatially considered. But space is not the ultimate measure of things. The ultimate measure of things is *conscience*, or man's moral consciousness, if you please. True greatness is not the greatness of space, nor of military power, nor of intellectual shrewdness, but it is the greatness of *moral goodness*. That is why Jesus progressively rules the world rather than Plato or Napoleon or Columbus or Galileo. Jesus developed in his life and demonstrated on the cross absolute and unquestioned moral goodness. Hence God could commit to him power without reserve: he was made Lord of all. Perhaps one might more accurately say that the possession of absolute goodness is the possession of unreserved power. Ultimate power, power in the moral world, is the power of goodness. To try to wield any other kind of force in the moral world, or in order to produce moral results brings only confusion and failure. Perhaps this was one thing that kept Jesus from appealing to spectacular claptrap or military power. He who thinks that the world can be dazzled into goodness or forced into righteousness only fools himself and wastes his energy.

Without doubt the New Testament writers thought of Jesus as coming into universal lordship in the resurrection. Matthew reports Jesus as saying after the resurrection: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (28: 18). In Romans 1: 4 Paul says that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Am. Rev.). I do not believe, however, that this translation does justice to Paul's thought. The American Bible Union translation gets nearer the thought when it says that he "was instated as the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead." What Paul means to say is not that the resurrection demonstrated or marked out Christ as the Son of God, but that by the resurrection he was instated in a position of power that rightfully belonged to him as the Son of God. The resurrection was the inauguration of Jesus into a position of authority and power that was rightfully his as the Son of God.¹ The resurrection of Jesus marked a

¹For this interpretation I am indebted to the late Dr. Wm. Arnold Stevens, of Rochester Theological Seminary, who was, I think, the greatest interpreter of Paul I have ever known. I would not want the reader to hold Dr. Stevens responsible for any exact statement of mine, but the general idea is the same.

transition in the state of being of Jesus: it was a transition in which he came into the possession of universal authority and power. This seems to me to represent the conception of the significance of the resurrection found everywhere in the New Testament.

The resurrection marks the transition of Christ to a state or condition of

SPIRITUAL OMNIPRESENCE

This matches the idea of his universal authority and power. He is not limited in authority and power, nor is he limited in spiritual presence. After predicating his universal authority and on the basis of this authority commanding his followers to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," etc., he says: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 18-20). Here he promises his universal presence to his people as they go in his name to Christianize the nations of the world. Some have objected to considering these the actual words of Jesus. They represent, so it is objected, too advanced theological ideas. They do not fit back into the situation at that time

with its undeveloped theological thought. But if one accepts the resurrection as a fact, then there is nothing at all improbable in words like these from the lips of the risen Saviour. Of course, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then such language at that time, or at any other time, sounds out of place. In that case, it can only represent the conscious or unconscious invention of an over-enthusiastic Christian of those early days who perhaps could not distinguish historical fact from his own fancies.

But there is one strange thing about it. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, and this language represents only the theological invention of a later generation read back into the mouth of Jesus, it is passing strange that the experiences of thousands upon thousands of Christian workers since that early day have been of just such a nature as would fit in exactly with this supposed promise of Jesus; that is, their experience fits in exactly with the supposition that he did rise. They have experienced such joy, inspiration and patience as only a living Saviour could give. Do you say it is illusion? Then this illusion has borne strange fruit, has produced strange results. If such an illusion

can produce such fruit, then we must live in a world of illusion, and joy and moral inspiration and moral goodness itself must be an illusion.

We see then that the resurrection of Jesus marks the difference between a Christ who only lived and died some centuries ago and who influences the world by his example and teaching—the post mortem influence of a good man—and a Christ who by conquering sin and death became the universal, spiritual Lord of our lives and of the world visible and invisible—the eternal King of the ages.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION OF JESUS FOR OUR
SALVATION

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FOR OUR SALVATION

IN the history of Christian thought much emphasis has been placed on the death of Jesus in relation to our salvation, but comparatively little on his resurrection. This is not in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament, nor does it answer the needs of man's moral and spiritual life. In this chapter we propose to consider something of the significance of the resurrection of Jesus as bearing on the question of our salvation.

THE RESURRECTION ESSENTIAL TO THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST

It has sometimes been stated that the resurrection of Jesus is significant for our salvation in that it signified God's acceptance and approval of his atoning work in his death. Perhaps this is true, although I do not recall any place in the New Testament where just that idea is presented. Paul does present the

thought that the exaltation of Jesus (which certainly included the resurrection) was a moral reward for his act of obedience in giving himself to the death of the cross (Phil. 2: 9). It was because of his obedience, consummated in the death of the cross, that God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name. Paul does not explain what it was in the death of Jesus that made it an act of obedience to God. But the New Testament writers present his whole life as a life of obedience. This comes out very clearly in John's Gospel. Jesus in that Gospel says many times that he came to do the Father's will. To do the Father's will is his meat and drink, the great passion of his life (John 4: 34, *et al*). His death was also in obedience to the Father's will (Phil. 2: 5ff). This obedience found its reward in his resurrection from the dead. We would miss it, however, if we should think of his resurrection as being only God's seal of approval on his atoning work, in the sense that his death was what saved us apart from the resurrection, and that the resurrection was just God's way of letting us know that his death was accepted as an atonement for our sins. The New Testament

rather presents the resurrection of Jesus as itself an integral and essential factor in the saving work of Christ. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom. 4: 25). Paul says again that if Christ be not risen from the dead we are yet in our sins (1 Cor. 15: 17), and that without the risen Christ our preaching and our faith are vain, there is nothing in them (1 Cor. 15: 14).

The resurrection of Jesus is the pivot on which New Testament Christianity turns. As already noted, it gives us a universal, spiritual, omnipotent Christ rather than a local, national one. The Christ of the New Testament is not merely a Christ who lived and died at a certain point in human history; he transcended death, rose victorious over it, and thereby became for us a Saviour of universal spiritual power. His kingdom is therefore not of this world. It is a kingdom that knows no limitations of national boundaries, or race or color. Peter made a great discovery when he discovered that God is no respecter of persons, but accepts men of any nationality or race when they come to him in the right spirit (Acts 10: 34). The resurrection of Jesus was the pivotal point in New Testament history, because it

marked the transition from a Christ limited by time and place to one who transcended all such limitations. This was the point at which Christianity broke away from Judaism. His rising from the dead made Christianity a universal religion rather than a sect of Judaism. The Christians of the New Testament were not men who looked back merely to the Christ manifested in history; they looked up to the Christ who rose above the limitations of time and place and became a universal Saviour, one who could be reached by complying with the spiritual conditions, on the part of men of all races and climes.

SALVATION NOT MERELY ESCAPE FROM PUNISHMENT

Consider again the statement that the resurrection of Jesus has its significance for our salvation in that it was God's seal of approval on the death of Christ as an atonement for our sins. This statement betrays a leaning toward the idea that salvation is a legalistic transaction in which we are let off from the punishment for our sins on the ground that Christ bore our punishment. Especially is this true if one sees in the resurrection of Jesus nothing but a seal of God's approval on the

death of Christ as an atonement for sin. Such a view does not look upon the resurrection as an essential factor in Christ's saving work, but simply as a seal of approval on his saving work. It views his death as an atonement for sin in the sense that it is the one and only saving work of Christ. Such a view of atonement looks on the death of Christ as being vicarious and *nothing but that*. Undoubtedly his death was vicarious, but as Dr. Mabie says, it is more than vicarious; it is vicario-vital.¹

What is salvation? In the minds of many people it seems to amount to about this. Christ bore the punishment of my sins and therefore when I believe in him God pardons me, and his pardon means that I am set free so far as the punishment of my sins is concerned. They claim to get this idea of salvation from Paul, especially Paul's doctrine of justification. It is easy enough to get this idea of salvation from Paul's writings. All one has to do is to consult his dictionary and exercise his logical faculty a little. One can read in a Greek lexicon that Paul's word which is translated "justify" means to "declare just." One then reasons that Paul therefore teaches that justification is

¹See "The Divine Reason of the Cross," by H. C. Mabie.

simply a transaction in which God "declares" one just, but does not make him just. It is a transaction in which one is set right in his relation with the law, but not made right in character. One is declared just on the basis of Christ's atoning work without being made right in heart and life. This conclusion is easy enough and is a good example of the fact that young preachers (and others) need to be given two warnings in trying to get at the meaning of the New Testament: one is to beware of the lexicon and the other is to beware of logic. If one will just stick closely to his lexicon and be logical, there is no further guarantee needed that he will never get at the meaning of the New Testament and never understand Christian principles. Because Paul uses here a term that had a forensic history or was used in legal procedure, to say that therefore he used it in a legalistic sense is not to interpret Paul but to make oneself the slave of the dictionary. A dictionary is a good thing as a servant but it is a very poor master. One could probably get at the sense of what Paul says better without a lexicon than he can when he thus becomes the slave of the lexicon. To understand what Paul means by justification we must do

two things besides consult the lexicon. We must take into account his whole discussion and we must consult our own experience of salvation. When we do this we will find that justification with Paul was no legalistic transaction in which we are let off from the punishment of our sins, but a revolutionary act of God in which we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. But somebody says that is not justification but regeneration. Well, it is regeneration; but regeneration and justification are not two transactions, they are one. Justification is a regenerative transaction. It is the justification of life (Rom. 5: 18); that is, justification and life are one and inseparable. In Paul's thought, sin, condemnation and death go together; so do faith, justification and life. When the objection is made to Paul's doctrine of justification that it encourages one to live in sin (Rom. 6: 1), Paul goes on to show that the justified man is one who has died to sin and risen to walk in newness of life. And he is not setting forth this dying to sin and rising in newness of life as something in addition to justification, but as an implication of justification. The idea, then, is not that one is regenerated *in addition* to justification, but rather that

justification itself involves regeneration. Regeneration is an aspect of justification.

It has sometimes been said that justification gives one a new standing with God, while regeneration gives him a new nature; justification changes one's relation to God, while regeneration changes the man himself in his inner life. But after all, each of these statements is saying the same thing in different ways. A man's moral nature is nothing apart from his relation to God. There is nothing about a man deeper or more fundamental than his relation to God. To change the man's relation to God therefore is to change his moral nature. A new relationship with God means a new heart; it means a new creation.

To talk therefore about Paul's doctrine of justification as legalistic is to miss the point. It is not legalistic. Paul uses forensic terminology, it is true; but that does not mean that his thought is legalistic. To say that his doctrine of justification is forensic or legalistic is to confuse the form of thought with the substance. It is to make oneself the slave of the dictionary. To infer in addition that one must have regeneration as a transaction separate from justification is to make oneself the slave

of logic. To make oneself the slave of the dictionary and of logic is a sure road to confusion and error.

FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN

Paul's doctrine of justification then is not legalistic. What he means by justification is a moral and spiritual transaction in which one is made right in relation with God and thus becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. The love of God comes into one's heart and the love of sin dies. It is a transaction in which one is freed from the bondage of sin as well as its punishment. The power of sin in one's life is broken and he realizes a spiritual freedom before impossible.

In Paul's teaching condemnation and justification are opposites. It is condemnation that necessitates justification. This he shows in Rom. 1: 17—3:20. He shows there that condemnation on account of sin has come on all men, Jew and Gentile, and necessitates their justification by the grace of God. Justification of the sinner comes on the basis of Christ's atoning work and on condition of faith, as shown in Rom. 3: 21-28. But just what does justification involve? Protestant

theology has usually answered that justification means freedom from condemnation and has interpreted this to mean freedom from guilt or *liability to punishment*. Justification then frees one from the punishment of sin. To free one from the bondage of sin something else was necessary. But Paul means more than freedom from punishment by justification. The blessedness of justification is the blessedness of freedom from condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1). Then he immediately adds in verse 2: "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.*" He is thinking here of two opposing forces as contending for the mastery in human life. One is sin and death; the other is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. In chapter 7, he describes in terms of his own experience what the "law (reign or rule) of sin and death" means. It means bondage, helplessness, despair. He tries under the law to deliver himself from that bondage. It is a state in which one is "carnal, sold under sin" (vs. 14). One can desire the good, but can not do it (vs. 15). He is helpless under the power of evil.

Finally, he cries in despair: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (vs. 24). Then he says: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vs. 25). He now finds deliverance in that the law (rule) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets him free from the law (rule) of sin and of death. Justification then means freedom from the bondage of sin and death. It means the incoming of a new life that sets one free from the bondage of sin.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW

At the end of chapter 3 Paul, after having set forth that justification comes by faith in Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, asks: "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith?" He answers his own question by saying: "God forbid: nay, we establish the law." In chapter 8, he shows how the law is established. He says: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (vss. 3, 4).

Now let us notice something of what Paul says here. He speaks of "what the law could not do." What is that? It could not break the power of sin in human life, could not set man free from its bondage, could not enable one to get victory over sin and live a righteous life. That failure of the law is graphically described in chapter 7. The reason it failed was because of the weakness of man. The law could not break the power of sin, in that it was weak through the flesh. The failure was in man, not the law. The law itself was holy, righteous and good (7: 12). But man is weak and can not meet its requirements. Hence it fails to justify, to break the power of sin. But God secured the desired end in another way. He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; that is, in human nature, but free from sin. He sent him as an offering for sin, and thereby *condemned sin in the flesh*; that is, broke its power. And the purpose of it all is that the ordinance (righteous requirement) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. God was working toward the end of delivering us from the condemnation and bondage of sin and setting us free to live a righteous life. He

gives us a new moral dynamic, a new life that enables us to do the thing that the law requires.

Justification then is freedom from condemnation—freedom from the bondage of sin, freedom to do what the law requires, power to live a righteous life. Salvation is not escape from punishment, not a fire insurance policy for the next life; it is being made a new creature, given a new moral dynamic, made to love God and hate sin.

THE PLACE OF THE RESURRECTION

But what is the bearing of the resurrection of Jesus on all this? It has a very definite bearing on it. If the atonement of Jesus were simply the bearing of so much suffering for us by him, if it were simply the payment of a debt to be measured in quantitative terms—that and nothing more—so that God could let us off from our suffering, and if salvation meant nothing but the escape from the punishment of our sins; if salvation were that kind of a transaction based on that kind of an atonement, then a dead Christ might save as well as a living Christ. In that case, his death only would have been necessary to our salvation, not his resurrection. But salvation is not

that kind of a transaction. It is moral and spiritual renovation: it is a new creation. It is itself a being crucified with Christ and a resurrection from the dead. And it takes a living Saviour to raise the spiritually dead. That is too great a task for a dead Jew.

THE MEANING OF FAITH

We are brought around again then to the point that Christian faith is not simply looking back to a Christ who lived and died at a certain point in human history. Christian faith is not simply the acceptance of facts, however well attested, not even the facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the foundation facts of the gospel. Nor is it simply the belief of a doctrine, however true or important the doctrine may be, not even the doctrine that Jesus is the Son of God, nor the doctrine of his atoning death, nor of his resurrection from the dead. It is more than the acceptance of facts or the belief of doctrines; it is trust in a Person. It is a bond of union between persons. It unites the trusting sinner to the living Saviour. And since it unites him to the living Saviour it works a revolution in his moral nature: it brings spiritual regeneration. It makes him a

new creature. One can not have faith in Jesus as Saviour and ever be the same man again.

UNION WITH CHRIST

This will help us to understand why Paul and John lay such stress on the believer's union with Christ. We are not saved by an absent, far-away Christ. He comes to us. He dwells within us. We are in him and he is in us. We must eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6: 53ff). He is the head; we are the members of his body (Romans 12: 3ff, 1 Cor. 12: 12ff). One would almost think that John and Paul were pantheists as they talk about the intimate, vital union between the living Saviour and the believer. But the union that they believe in is something more vital and even more intimate than a pantheistic union. It is not the cold, dead unity of impersonal "substance," in which the believer loses his personal identity and perhaps the Infinite never had personal identity to lose. It is rather the close and intimate fellowship of a gracious Redeemer who has so loved the sinner as to bear his woe in death and who now shares the glories of his triumphant life with the trusting sinner. It is a union analagous to the closest

and most blessed fellowships of this life, such as that of husband and wife (Eph. 5:22ff), but also something more glorious than that.

It is a union in which the living Christ works creatively by his Spirit in the believer to reproduce in the believer his own moral and spiritual image. God works in us by the mighty energy of his power that raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1: 19-21). The only power that could recreate a sinner dead in trespasses and sins is the power of God that made the worlds and that raised Jesus from the dead. It is a union in which the creative Christ who conquered death in the resurrection awakens in us all the potencies of our moral and spiritual natures and brings them to realization. It is not a union, however, in which we are passive. We are not dead things. We are persons. As God works in us therefore we should work out in our lives to full expression and realization what God works in us to accomplish. His purpose is realized, his work is completed, only as we work out what he works in. His creative activity does not do away with the necessity for activity on our part. Rather his creative activity is consummated in our moral and spiritual activity. Some things we do not fully

possess until we express them. Character is crystallized in expression. An inactive faith therefore is not faith at all. God works creatively in us, but he works in accordance with moral and spiritual laws. He works only as our moral and spiritual natures are aroused and express themselves in moral and spiritual activity.

We should work out our salvation because it is God that works in us both to will and to do (Phil. 2: 12, 13). God works in us to awaken aspiration, longing, yearning; and then he works to bring our aspiration to realization in deed. And since God's work is not finished until the deed is done we must cooperate if his purpose is to be realized. We do not cooperate with him, however, as with an equal; we cooperate with him by yielding to his almighty power, by trusting his sovereign grace and by following his divine leading.

Salvation then is not something handed down in a ready-made package, complete once for all. Salvation is not something that Christ gives us apart from himself. He gives us salvation in giving us himself. He keeps us saved by continuing to give us himself. Because he lives we shall live also (John 14: 19).

He saves to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7: 25). The living Christ is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2: 1). He is the assurance of our continued standing with a holy God. Christ Jesus, alive forevermore, is our salvation now and eternally.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION OF JESUS FOR THE
FUTURE LIFE

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURREC- TION OF JESUS FOR THE FUTURE LIFE

THE question of life beyond death is one of perennial interest to mankind. If a man die, shall he live again? This question has engaged the earnest thought of mankind as far back as we have any record of the thoughts of men.

Before the World War one heard much talk to the effect that religion ought to concern itself with this life, not with the next. One does not hear so much of that now. There is perhaps more being said about immortality and the future life than ever before. Since the War there is a revival of interest in spiritualism and all kinds of movements that deal with the future life. On the other hand, there are those to-day who seem to fear that belief in personal immortality is dying out among certain classes of educated people. The writer has no fears on that point. Men will no more

cease to believe in personal immortality than they will cease to take air into their lungs or food for their bodies, no more than plant life will cease to drink in the life-giving properties of fresh air, sunshine and soil. Man is made for immortality and his soul turns toward life beyond death as naturally as the sunflower turns toward the sun.

ARGUMENTS FOR IMMORTALITY

Yet man's instinctive longing for life beyond death, his natural belief in such a life, seeks rational vindication. Hence there have been various arguments for immortality, just as there have been various arguments for the existence of God. These arguments in each case have not been the source of the belief; they have rather been the vindication of beliefs that men already held. Men did not come to believe in God and immortality because they had reasoned themselves into believing in these ideas; they rather believed in God and immortality and then sought to justify their belief to themselves and others. These arguments are the form that their thoughts took as they undertook to justify their belief in God and immortality.

But arguments have never satisfied the mind with reference to immortality. Such arguments are not worthless; far from it. The belief in life beyond death is a rational belief and can be given rational vindication. But these arguments have never been entirely convincing. They leave a margin for doubt. They cannot do much more than enable us to say, "*Perhaps* we shall live beyond death." This was about the best Socrates could do. He had a rather definite hope of life beyond the grave, but not certainty.

Besides, these arguments at the best only give us a doctrine, an idea of immortality. But ideas alone do not satisfy the religious life of man.

TWO ORDERS OF FACT

But is there anything more substantial than the idea or doctrine of immortality that we can attain? The New Testament does give us something more substantial. It comes out of the resurrection of Jesus. There are two phases of it.

One is the resurrection of Jesus as a fact of history. We have set forth in Chapter I something of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. As we there saw, that evidence is not

simply the testimony of the documents that we possess in our New Testament; it is the total fact of Christianity. Christianity is founded on the resurrection of Jesus and is the evidence for his resurrection. The very existence, vitality and persistence of the Christian movement is evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. A living Christ and a living Christianity are inseparable. A vital Christianity could no more exist and persist in the world apart from a living Christ than sunshine could exist apart from the sun.

But it is not necessary here to repeat the arguments for the resurrection of Jesus. These arguments have been given. Assuming now that the resurrection of Jesus is accepted as a fact on the basis of the evidence we have, it follows then that belief in life beyond the grave comes down out of the realm of speculation into the realm of fact. If Jesus rose from the dead, then death is not the end of human existence, but the future life is a fact.

But it may be said that even if one accepts the resurrection of Jesus as a fact, this only gives one an idea or doctrine of immortality. This is readily granted. It was stated above that two things were necessary to make the

future life more than an idea for us. In addition to the resurrection of Jesus as a fact of history there must be communion with the living Christ as a matter of vital experience. Belief in a fact, even the resurrection of Jesus, is only an idea, a doctrine, if it stops with that. But the Christ who rose from the dead is accessible to faith. We can have fellowship with him, and this fellowship with him makes life beyond death more than an idea: it then becomes an assured reality. One who believes in Jesus as the living Saviour and Lord has the experience of a life that transcends the limits of the natural. It rises above the realm of the visible and tangible world. It is spiritual in its nature. This is what the Gospel of John presents to us as "eternal life." It is eternal, not simply as a matter of endless duration, but in its spiritual and supernatural quality. One who experiences this eternal life has the assurance in his heart that this life is imperishable in its nature. He might not be able to put his reasons for believing in the imperishable nature of this life in the form of a syllogism nor of a logical deduction of any kind; nevertheless he has an assurance that speaks peace to his soul and quiets his fears.

This assurance with reference to the future life finds expression in the New Testament in many ways. In the sixth chapter of John, Jesus says four times, with reference to the man that believes on him, that he will raise that one in the last day (verses 39, 40, 44, 54). He says in John 8: 51: "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." In John 11: 26, he said to the sorrowing Martha, "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

Here we have two orders of fact that take the belief in immortality out of the realm of speculation and bring it into the realm of fact and experience. Belief in immortality for the Christian is more than a speculation. It is a living conviction growing out of his communion with the living Saviour.

We still hear something every now and then to the effect that belief in immortality is not essential to religion. Some go even so far as to say that religion without belief in immortality is nobler and more unselfish than a religion that has to depend on the idea of the future life to support itself. We are even told that to appeal to the future life for the vindication of God's ways with man, or as a means of getting strength for the tasks and burdens of this

life, is unworthy or even degrading. One should do right, we are told, for the sake of doing right, even without reference to the future consequences of our deeds.

But this kind of talk sounds much as if one should say that the test of a flying machine is that it should be able to fly without air as a medium; that it should fly in a vacuum. The spiritual world and the future life constitute the very atmosphere in which religion lives. It is nothing against a fish that it cannot live out of water, nor is it against a bird that it cannot fly in a vacuum. Some men would give us a religion without God or a future life. Such a religion would be noble, indeed! Not to discuss the merits of such a system, it is enough to call attention to the fact that it is not religion. Much less is it Christianity.

It is true that some forms of religion have conceived of the future life in an unworthy way. Some forms of Christianity may have done this. But this is no argument against immortality. The Christians of the New Testament did not believe in the future life as a means of getting some reward for service selfishly rendered for what they expected to get out of it. They believed in the future life

because they experienced a life here and now of a quality that they could not believe of a perishable nature. This is the significance of Paul's statement when he speaks about the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor. 1: 22), and of the first fruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8: 23). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise (Eph. 1: 13, 14); that is, his present abiding in our hearts is God's promise of a more glorious life yet to come. We are sealed in the Spirit. The Spirit in us is God's seal by which he pledges himself for our deliverance in the day of redemption; that is, the day of resurrection (Eph. 4: 30).

With reference to the light thrown on the destiny of the Christian from our fellowship with the risen Christ we gather then, in the first place, that it is the guarantee of our continued existence after death. This fellowship of the Christian with the living Saviour confirms the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is the historical foundation of Christianity, and the continuance and vitality of Christianity constitute, on the other hand, the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Someone may say that this is reasoning in a circle. No, it is see-

ing two sides of a sphere. The one fact involves the other.

HIGHER LIFE

The resurrection of Jesus and our communion with him give us assurance, not only of continued life after death, but also a more blessed life than we enjoy in this world.

One thing bearing on this is the fact, previously noticed, that Jesus was not raised back to the plane of life on which he had lived before the crucifixion, but to a higher state of existence. His body was not a body of flesh and blood such as he had before death, nor will ours be. His body had higher powers, it seemed, and Paul says that our resurrection bodies will not be bodies of flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15: 50). This shows that our life beyond death will be one of a higher order than we now enjoy.

Paul had this hope when he said that, as between continuing here to serve his brethren and going on to be with the Lord, so far as he himself was concerned, it would be very far better to depart and be with the Lord (Phil. 1: 23). Our life of fellowship with Christ on the other side will be the continuance and

fruition of our fellowship with him here. The only assurance that any man can have that he will go to heaven when he dies is that he shall have something of heaven in this life. The bond of union between the trusting soul and its Lord is one that is stronger than death. That union will abide the shocks of time and will endure through death. The life that we live now in Christ is a life that is death-transcending in its nature. It will, therefore, endure eternally and the soul born of God will live a life of fellowship with him forever.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP CENTRAL

This shows another thing. The blessedness of salvation is primarily the blessedness of personal relationships. Our eternal happiness will not consist so much in where we are as in what we shall be and with whom we shall be. Some have said that heaven would be here on the earth; others have said not. As a matter of fact, that is not the main question. The primary question is what we shall be in relation to God as revealed in Christ. Even to be with Christ is not primarily a matter of place and space relations. It is primarily a matter of spiritual relations and personal attitudes. To

be with Christ is first of all a matter of personal adjustment to him. If we are rightly adjusted to him here and know him in our hearts, we shall know him more fully on the other side. There is a tie there that death cannot break, but will rather strengthen. Death is the gateway to a life of closer and more blessed fellowship with Christ on the other side.

Death for Jesus, which was even to his blessed eyes a thing to be dreaded, became an entrance into a higher life, a more exalted state of existence. Through submission to death he found exaltation and glory. So shall we. He triumphed over death both for himself and for us. He battled with the monster death and conquered him in order that he should not be a monster for us. Because he conquered death, we shall also conquer him, and shall be able to say: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15: 55).

Our blessedness is to be interpreted in personal terms. Time and place have significance only in relation to persons and personal experiences. Our joy on the other side will be the joy of full personal life in fellowship with

the supreme Person of human history, Christ Jesus our Lord, and all those who love and serve him. Hell will be eternity without Christ. Eternity without him could be nothing but hell. Heaven will be eternity with him. Eternity with him could be nothing but heaven. His presence and fellowship with him would turn the deepest hell into the seventh heaven, and the seventh heaven would be the darkest abyss of woe without him.

I was once asked by a student if I thought of the description of heaven in Revelation 21 and 22 as figurative or literal language. My answer was that I thought it was figurative. The student thought this would take all the reality out of salvation and make it "only a figure of speech." My reply to this was that to make the language there used literal would give us rather a cheap heaven. I do not think I should care for a heaven that was all city. I should like to get out into the country occasionally. If a city of streets of literal gold, and a river of literal water and a tree of literal fruit is the best heaven that can be found in the life beyond, one can do almost that well here. Jesus offered to the woman at the well water that was better than that. Surely he will have

something superior to it for us in the Great Beyond¹.

Yes, these wondrous symbols of John's heavenly city represent to us the blessedness of that life in which God and the Lamb constitute its light, its temple, its glory. God and the Lamb will there be the light of our souls, the temple of our worship, the glory of the eternal life of the redeemed.

¹The book of Revelation belongs to a class of literature that dealt in apocalyptic imagery never meant to be taken literally.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION OF JESUS FOR THE
COMING OF THE KING-
DOM OF GOD

CHAPTER VII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FOR THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“**T**HY kingdom come” (Matt. 6: 10). Thus Jesus taught his disciples to pray. We gather from this that the coming of the kingdom of God is to be one of the chief matters of thought, prayer and effort on the part of his disciples.

THREE PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

We might begin this chapter by a summary statement with reference to three phases of the kingdom of God as set forth in the New Testament.¹ These three phases are its initiation, its progress and its consummation.

The kingdom of God was founded or initiated by the coming of Christ into the world for the salvation of sinners. The historical establishment of the gospel order was the founding

¹On this point, see my “System of Christian Doctrine,” Part Four, Chapter V.

or initiation of the kingdom of God on earth. This gospel had been promised or prefigured in the Old Testament order of things (Rom. 1: 1-3; 4: 1ff. Gal. 4: 1ff and the whole book of Hebrews). The gospel fulfilled the Old Testament dispensation as the day fulfils the dawn, or as the man fulfils the boy. That which was partial and incomplete came to fuller development and realization (Matt. 5: 17ff; Heb. 1: 1).

That the kingdom of God was initiated with the coming of Jesus into the world is made clear in the New Testament. John the Baptist preached that men should repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. 3: 2). John's work was preparatory. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to make ready the way of the Lord, to make his paths straight (Matt. 3: 3; Isa. 40: 1ff); that is, John's work was to prepare a highway over which the coming Messianic King was to have his triumphal entry. Matthew's Gospel is here definitely setting forth Jesus as the King promised in the Old Testament and John as his forerunner.

Jesus also came preaching that men should repent and believe the gospel, on the ground

that the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1: 14, 15). On another occasion, being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he said that the kingdom did not come with outward demonstration or observation. No man could announce the kingdom, saying: "Lo, here! or there!" But Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you," or "in your midst," it might be translated. Either translation involves the idea that the kingdom was a present, spiritual reality that came without observation or outward show. It was there and the Pharisees did not know it. Besides, Jesus announced the conditions of entrance into the kingdom of God; such as being converted and becoming as a little child (Matt. 18: 1-4; Luke 18: 17) and being born again (John 3: 3, 5). If Jesus means for men of his day to have the qualities of childlikeness, humility, and conscious poverty of spirit (Matt. 5: 3), if he meant that they should bear persecution for righteousness' sake, then he meant for them to understand that the kingdom of God was a present reality.

But there is no use to dwell longer on this point. It is one on which New Testament

students are agreed. It is true that there is a form of radicalism that holds that Jesus started with the expectation of being received by the Jews as their king, but had to revise his program when he saw that they would not receive him and hence postponed the kingdom to a future age. There is a form of premillennialism that agrees with this view that Jesus postponed the founding of the kingdom to a future age.¹ But either form of this view that denies that Jesus taught that the kingdom was a present reality in his day is so utterly out of harmony with the gospel records that there is no use to spend more space on the matter.

Jesus also taught that the kingdom was to have indefinite advancement during the present gospel age. This is made clear in the parables of the leaven and of the mustard seed (Matt. 13: 31-33).

It is true that there are those who say that these parables do not teach the growth of the reign of truth and righteousness, but rather the growth and power of error and evil within professedly Christian ranks. This view, however, does not come from an exegesis of these passages; it is a view imposed on the passages

¹See Stafford, "A Study of the Kingdom."

from the preconceived ideas of the advocate. A man can see this view in these passages only by reading them through his own pessimistic and disordered vision. Jesus does not, in these passages or anywhere else, tell us just how complete will be the triumphs of the kingdom during the gospel age. He does teach his disciples to pray that God's kingdom shall come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6: 10). They are to preach the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1: 8). They are to evangelize, make disciples, of all nations. But they are to do more than that. They are to strive to bring all men completely under the sway of God's will and Christ's rule. They are to teach all disciples all things that he has commanded them (Matt. 28: 18-20). We may never completely attain this ideal any more than we can completely attain the ideal of godlikeness in individual character, but that is no reason why we should not move in the direction of the goal and strive with all our might for its attainment.

Indeed, there are indications that evil will not be completely eliminated from the Messiah's kingdom until the end. The parable of the tares seems to teach that only at the end

of the age will the Son of Man come and make the final and complete separation between the good and the bad (Matt. 13: 30, 40-43). This agrees with what is said about the judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Only when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of judgment will the final separation take place. Paul teaches practically the same thing when he says that death (in the resurrection) is to be the last enemy that Christ is to conquer. He locates this at the second coming (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

There are, then, in the teaching of Jesus and in the New Testament as a whole these three phases of the kingdom: its initiation in the coming of Jesus and the founding of the gospel order, its progress during the gospel age, and its consummation at the final manifestation of Christ with the ushering in of the eternal kingdom of God.

THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

It is also made clear in the teaching of Jesus, as well as in the rest of the New Testament, that the kingdom of God was not to be a political kingdom. It was not to be promoted by military power nor carnal weapons. It was

thus fundamentally different from the Jewish theocracy of the Old Testament. The qualities of the subjects of the kingdom were spiritual qualities—purity of heart, meekness of spirit, non-resistance to evil, trustful submission to God and so on. The kingdom signified primarily the reign of God in the hearts of men.

But the kingdom was social in its nature as well as spiritual. Perhaps I should say that it was social because it was spiritual. To be at peace with God means to be at peace with men. To love God means to love one's brother. To have God's forgiveness means to forgive one's brother.

The kingdom of God, then, is the rule of God's love and forgiving grace in the hearts and lives of men; such a rule as will ideally bring all human relationships and social activities in obedience to the will of God.

NO TEMPORAL REIGN ON EARTH

In a former chapter we saw that the resurrection signified the triumph of Jesus over sin and death and gives us a Christ of universal power and knowledge, a Christ who transcends the limitations of time and space and is with

his people everywhere as they live in spiritual fellowship with him. The resurrection of Jesus thus defines for us the nature of the kingdom in that it determines the nature of the king. As we saw in the former chapter, Jesus did not rise to live again on the natural plane of life on which he had lived before his death. His resurrection was more than resuscitation. This precludes the idea that Jesus will ever return to the world to establish a literal reign of a thousand years, or of any other length of time, here on the earth. He may reign on earth after his return, but if so his reign will be a different character from any thing we know now on the earth. The subjects of that reign will have to be introduced into it by death and resurrection or by a corresponding transformation if still living when Jesus comes. There will not be a mixed order of things in which Christ in his glorified state, with saints raised to the glorified state, will reign over men and women being born during that age with bodies of flesh and blood, subject to decay and death. Such an order would be an anomaly, a spiritual absurdity. If Christ reigns on the earth after his return, it will be over saints in resurrection bodies living in a world that has been renovated

and made new. It will be a new order of things through and through, not an order partly of the old and partly of the new. Death and decay will be done away with at his coming (1 Cor. 15: 24ff) and all evil shall be cast out of his kingdom (Matt. 13: 40ff).

ASSURANCE OF TRIUMPH

Our assurance of the triumph of the kingdom of God lies in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead and lives forevermore. The key to the understanding of the book of Revelation is in the first chapter in John's vision of the living Christ. This Christ appears to John in his majestic strength, alive from the dead, and announces to John that he is alive forevermore (vs. 17, 18). One noticeable thing about this Christ as he appears to John is that there proceeds from his mouth a sharp two-edged sword (vs. 16). This signifies that the Son of God goes forth to war. Doubtless the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of his mouth is the word of God, the gospel of salvation. Through this gospel he is to subdue the nations and the kingdom of God is to come. The Son of God will never cease to make war until his enemies bite the dust and the rule of this earth

has passed into the hands of God and of his Christ (Rev. 11: 15; 12: 10).

Christ's resurrection signified his triumph over sin and death. He grappled with sin and death in a terrific struggle and conquered them. This was true so far as his more immediate and personal relations with sin and death were concerned. And this more immediate and personal victory is the token of a universal victory that is to come. Christ did not cease his warfare on sin and death when he rose from the dead. That was only the first round of the fight. It was just the successful issue of the first campaign of a long warfare. And the living Christ himself is conducting that warfare. Some Christians talk as if they thought Christ's followers were orphans in the world. But he said that he would not leave us orphans. He said, I come to you (John 14: 18). And he did come. He came in spiritual power on the day of Pentecost. By the power of his Spirit, using his people and his gospel, he is now working for the extension of his kingdom on earth. One day he will manifest himself for the consummation of that kingdom.

But let us encourage ourselves with the thought that the kingdom of God is to triumph.

It will triumph, both in its progress during this age and in its final consummation. Wherein lies our assurance of this? *It lies in the fact that Jesus is alive from the dead.* Evil is powerful in the world. It has been fastening its hold on the world for centuries and centuries. Sometimes one is tempted to think that its strong hold on human life cannot be broken. If one had no assurance other than that that comes from a surface view of things, this would probably be a justifiable conclusion. But surface appearances are not always, if ever, the truest ones. To get at the truth with reference to any phase of reality or life, one often has to look long and patiently until he discerns what is not at first apparent. If one looks at any phase of human life and activity, it is not at all apparent at first that righteousness will triumph over sin and evil. If one looks at business, politics, public amusements, education, religion itself, there is much that is discouraging. Sin does have a mighty hold on human life and activity.

And let it be said here that no man has a right to be an optimist with reference to human life who has not faced the concrete facts and ills of life. There is too much of what some-

body has called the "cheerful idiot" type of optimism—the kind of optimism that encourages itself by disregarding the ills and sufferings of the world, like a boy trying to keep up his courage by whistling as he passes a lonely cemetery on a dark night. The writer also recognizes the fact that many superficial formulas have been proposed for the woes of the world. He has no desire to add another to the list of these cheap formulas. Nor does he believe in the optimism of the well-fed and well-kept. It is easy enough for the well-kept man to look in superficial wisdom on the sufferings of his less fortunate brothers and tell them that their sufferings are not so serious after all.

And yet recognizing the seriousness of the sin and evil of the world; recognizing, too, that it is not sin in the abstract, such as the theologian and the philosopher have often dealt with, that ails the world, but sins in the concrete; recognizing that the evil of the world is radical and powerful—the author still believes that God is greater than sin and that his Christ is to triumph over it. He is to triumph because he has triumphed. He has given a demonstration of his sin-conquering power.

I doubt if any man can be a pessimist and really believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The Christian's optimism with reference to the triumph of the kingdom of God grows out of his communion with the risen Lord. One who shares the life of the Christ who conquered sin and death in resurrection power has in his own heart the assurance of the ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil, of Christ over Satan. This is not to fall back on a blind mysticism. The Christian's communion with the living Christ is not blind mysticism. It is mysticism; that is, it is communion of the finite with the Infinite, of man with God. But it is not blind, because it is based on objective, historical facts and also it is an intelligent committal of oneself to the living Christ that brings a response that lifts the whole life of the believer on to a higher moral and spiritual plane.

This assurance with reference to the progressive and final triumph of the kingdom, then, is not a matter of logical demonstration mainly; nor is it exclusively a matter of Scripture exegesis; it is largely a matter of spiritual intuition; it comes as a result of spiritual experience. One knows that Christ will ultimately triumph over all evil because one now

experiences the power of Christ that is sin-conquering and evil-transcending in its nature. It is thus a matter of religious faith, certainly not a scientific demonstration. We are here dealing with a realm where scientific demonstration is out of the question.

This faith, however, does give an assurance that nerves one for the most heroic endeavor in promoting the kingdom of God on earth. This assurance with reference to the coming of the kingdom, then, is not to be taken as an encouragement to a supine and inactive waiting, but as an incentive to militant activity to bring in the reign of righteousness among men. Faith in the living Christ and his program of world conquest does not lull one to sleep but stirs him to activity.

WHAT CHRISTIANS NEED

What present-day Christians need above all else is a fresh inflow of spiritual power from the risen Christ. We have money, organization, machinery. Our greatest need as Christians is spiritual power. We do not have too much of these other things, but we do have too little of spiritual power. Perhaps it might be said that we have as much of these other

things as we need unless we had more spiritual power. Possibly we have as much material wealth and ecclesiastical organization as we can use to good ends unless we had more spiritual power. Money, learning, social prestige—these things cannot of themselves bring in the kingdom of God. It is not by military might, nor by political power, nor by ecclesiastical organization, but by the power of the divine Spirit that human hearts are killed to the love of evil and brought under the sway of the will of God. I believe in evangelism, missions, social service, peace programs, movements for promoting international justice and good will, but all these things are useless and vain unless informed by a wisdom that is more than human and energized by a power that is above man's. The wisdom that must guide and the power that must energize in all these movements must be personal in its nature and source—the power of the living Christ.

Christians need to recognize anew the living Christ, submit anew to him, preach him with fresh power which he will furnish, and thus set forward the kingdom of God among men.

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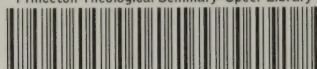
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